the house concerned. Then they go slowly down to the river. Large poles, which were set out the day before, are now placed on the river. The people jump onto the poles and try to break them. If this happens a general great shout of joy sounds forth. If all the poles are broken, they fetch a particularly strong pole, actually a beam, and place it over the river. The people now divide up into two halves, and a battle begins for the possession of this beam. But the fight is a friendly one and even though there are many blows and even wounds, the people do not engage in a serious fight, even though they battle and struggle for the possession of the beam so hard that many lose all their clothes. The side which has the luck of winning possession of the beam will be healthy (free of cholera) and well for the coming year according to the belief of the people.

The use of charcoal also borders on magic. Thus P.W. Hartte, Apostolic Missionary, S.V.D. writes: (7) If a mother has a long journey to

7. Hartte, Die Religion der heidnischen Khasi [The Religion of the Heathen Khasi]. Apostelkalender, 1895. [Apostle Calendar]

make, she makes a black mark with charcoal on the forehead of her child to protect it from any harm. Then she takes a longish piece of wood, splits it at one end into four parts, and puts the piece of charcoal in between. The mother carries this in her hand on the journey.

The same missionary also reports the doings of the Khasi during an eclipse of the moon: "If there is an eclipse of the moon, the Khasi believe that a frog is with the moon and is eating it up. The Khasi like the moon very much, and in order to prevent the frog from eating up the

[72] soon they try to frighten the frog with noise and to drive him away. A few days ago we experienced a sample of it. In all the villages the Khasi beat drums and screamed at the same time. It was a purely hellish spectacle." (8)

8. Loc. cit., p. 62.

[73] The Khasi also have no explanation for thunderstorms. They believe, therefore, that the kniid (devils) cause them. Especially disturbing to them is thunder, which can be extremely violent in a tropical storm. When lightning strikes [74] anywhere, they sacrifice to the kniid u pyrthei a fat pig, the blood of which is smeared on the altar in order to propitiate him and to prevent the lightning from striking again.

[75] When the Khasi sacrifice to protect themselves from harm or to heal themselves from illnesses, they murmur formulae or prayers during the sacrifice. They implore the invisible powers at the same time and thus support the offered sacrifice. They call this murmuring tin-shia (swearing-sacrificing). It is also reported thus of the sacrifices in Mawphrang (9) "Each person places

[76] 9. P. Dr. G. Becker, Die Mawphrang-Puja in den Khasibergen (Assam) [The Mawphrang Puja in the Khasi Mountains (Assam)], Anthropos, IV (1909), p. 890.

the little bottle of liquor on the little pile of mud in front of him. This represents the altar. Then they take pepper leaves and betel leaves and place them in front of the altar in a certain way next to and on top of each other; pieces of betel nut are placed on top and the whole is sprinkled with rice, kyu meal and rymai meal.